The Desert Knowledge precinct in Alice Springs is taking shape with Chief Minister, Clare Martin, today announcing that tenders have been called for the first stage of the precinct head-works.

The $1.2 million tender is for the construction of a dual carriageway along the Stuart Highway and for the precinct entry, the Avenue of Knowledge.

"Desert Knowledge Australia is a unique project that will position Central Australia at the forefront of expertise in living in arid environments," Ms Martin said.

"The precinct, south of Alice Springs, will be the physical focal point for DKA and will showcase Northern Territory expertise in arid zone design.

"It will also show the world what can be achieved when environmental considerations are successfully incorporated into a large building project."

Ms Martin congratulated the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Environment for its meticulous approach to ensuring environmental and energy efficiency considerations are taken into account in every stage of planning for the precinct.

"DIPE undertook 12 months of planning and consultation to ensue there will be minimal impact on the site and that proper environmental controls will be in place."

"A Code of Construction Conduct will be put in place and covers issues such as..."
the removal of building waste and food scraps from the site on a daily basis, strict procedures for refuelling and washing down construction vehicles and ensuring that flora and fauna are not disturbed or damaged.

"Every tree on the site has been surveyed and the new buildings will be located so tree removal is minimised."

Traditional owners and native title-holders have been consulted extensively during planning for the precinct.

"I am a keen supporter of the Desert Knowledge project and my Government is committing in excess of $20 million over 4 years to the development of the precinct," Ms Martin said.

Construction of Stage 1 of the head-works is expected to start by February 2004.